

Meeting Notes
Blackstone River Bikeway Task Force

DATE: Tuesday April 29, 2008
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

PLACE: MassHighway District 3 Office
First Floor Conference Room
403 Belmont Street
Worcester, MA 01604

ATTENDEES: List Attached

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kim Sloan, MHD's Project Manager, opened the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Project Update – Segments 1 and 2

Sections 1 and 7 – In response to a question raised by Jan Reitsma of the National Heritage Corridor Commission regarding the commitment of funding for Sections 1 and 7 of the BRBW, Kim Sloan stated that these segments were not yet on the TIP. The Towns of Millville and Blackstone were urged to submit project need and project initiation forms to MHD to initiate the process of getting these project sections eligible for design.

Kim noted that bridge type studies have been completed by MHD for Section 1. Arthur Frost noted that a combined review is appropriate in this situation due to the high level of public involvement that has already occurred on the project. Both Sections 1 and 7 will be addressed in the Single EIR/EA and a revised preferred alignment identified in Worcester. He explained that the entire project is active, and the project review forms are necessary to formalize the process to hire a designer.

Comment – Margaret Carroll, Millville Historical Commission, raised the issue of the long standing request to have the first mile of Segment 1 included and advanced with Segment 2. She urged MHD to include this portion of the bikeway from the Triad Bridge to Central Street in Millville in the Section 2 design contract, as she had in the past. Kim responded that MHD had considered this request, but it was denied. However, Kim offered to bring it to the attention of the Commissioner for reconsideration. Jan suggested MassHighway meet with Millbury to discuss the Town's concerns and to explain the rationale for MassHighway's position.

Segment 2 – Kim reviewed the status of the design of Segment 2. The 25% Design Hearing was held in January 2008. 75% Design will be completed this fall and the project

is scheduled to move into PS&E in early 2009. At this time the project is programmed to be advertised on October 3, 2011.

Comment – Task Force is looking to have the project moved up, especially once it is ready to go.

3. Project Update – Segments 3, 4, 5 and 7

Frank Vitale, Parsons Project Manager, began an overview of the project by identifying the team's design goals. These included a review of the preferred alignment to achieve the following:

- reduce impacts
- get it off the road if feasible
- evaluate alternative surface treatments

Overall the Parsons team is looking at approximately 10 alternates that may impact less than 20% of the alignment. These alternate analyses should be complete within 2 months.

Progress Meetings to Date – Parsons has been doing extensive field reviews and meetings with stakeholders over the past 3 months. Frank Vitale reported on the meetings that have been held or that are anticipated:

- DCR (3 meetings) – meeting again in May
- MEPA
- P&W (2 meetings)
- Aquarion Water
- City of Worcester, Sutton, Millbury, Grafton, Northbridge and Uxbridge
- National Grid (proposed meeting)

Upcoming meetings:

Agency Early Coordination Meeting – May 8, 2008

MA Historical Commission with MHD

Web Site Activation – The new MassHighway Blackstone Bikeway website has been designed and approved and will be activated in the next couple weeks.

Project Schedule

- Finalize revised preferred alignment by June
- Conclude environmental documentation by end of year

Comment – Let Task Force members know, by e-mail, when the web site is available.

Review of Preferred Alignment – Peter Donohue and Dave Patnaude, Parsons, reviewed the alignment from Worcester to Blackstone focusing on those areas where alignment refinements and alternates are being investigated to reduce impacts. Each of the areas

under consideration has been reviewed with input from stakeholders. Ongoing coordination with communities and stakeholders will continue as alternates are advanced into a final alignment.

Comment – Segment 7 – Worcester – Colin Novick, Worcester Land Trust, expressed concern that the shown alignment along Franklin Street would not be used by commuters or families because of excessive interaction with roadway traffic.

Comment – Segment 5 – Jen Hager, Town of Sutton, expressed support for a spur trail using the existing P&W archway. She noted that bridges at both ends (Depot Street and Blackstone Street) currently have weight restrictions which may limit future emergency vehicle access to this part of the alignment.

Comment – Segment 5 – Grafton – Stephen Bishop, Town of Grafton, would like to see some connection with the local roadway network in the vicinity of Depot Street, if the alignment is moved off-road as proposed at the Section 4/5 junction.

Comments – Segment 3 – Oak Street – Uxbridge – Meagan DiPrete, Town of Uxbridge, indicated that the Wassenar property is under DEP order to clean up of his property and a portion of the property was to be acquired by DCR for floodplain restoration. An off street alignment is desired by the community, but cautioned that property owners south of the DCR property may not favor the alignment. Peter stated that trade offs between impacts on floodplain and the alignment across the tow path through DCR property are being assessed in discussions with DCR.

Environmental Document Update – Susan Roux, Parsons, discussed that the combined Single EIR/EA/Section 4(f) document format has been discussed with the MEPA office. The document is organized to fulfill both State and Federal environmental requirements, and a draft is planned to be completed before the end of 08 and submitted to MassHighway for review. A Purpose and Need statement has been prepared. Concurrently, a permitting strategy is being developed and coordinated with the permitting agencies and will be included in the Single EIR/EA.

Comment – How can the Task Force members assist in continuing progress on the project during this phase.

Members of the Parsons team emphasized that they wanted to be informed of any issues and/or impediments to developing the bikeway alignment within any of the communities as soon as possible in order to address potential concerns before they become problematic.

4. Other Business/Questions

Right-of-Way – Dan Driscoll, DCR, noted that there is no mechanism to take ROW. The method of how right-of-way will be acquired needs to be determined by the Commissioners of MassHighway and DCR.

Funding - Funding constraints and the need to develop a funding strategy were discussed at length. Jan suggested that the Task Force should prepare a matrix of the bikeway segments with project development status, funds committed, capital costs and funding issues, etc. for tracking funding issues. The matrix should be posted onto the website to keep the Task Force updated. Arthur Frost recapped the status of funding commitments thus far;

- \$6M in HPP funding which included \$2.5M in funding for the Worcester Bicycle pavilion and portions of the bikeway on the Common.
- \$4.6M – to complete the Single EIR/EA and final design for Sections 3, 4 and 5
- \$1M – to complete Section 2 design
- \$250K – to complete Type Studies for 12 bridges

An additional \$40M still needs to be committed to complete the project.

5. Next Meeting Date

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

10:30 AM

MassHighway District 3

First Floor Conference Room